



## MIDDLESEX COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **County Looks to Plays-In-The-Park Patrons After Record-High Hunger Rates**

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY** – Summer in Central Jersey brings with it both the good and the bad. Almost ceremoniously, the annual temperature spike means that Plays-In-the-Park, a County-sponsored, more than half-century old staple of outdoor theater in Edison’s Roosevelt Park, has officially kicked-off its season.

Unfortunately, the summer also guarantees that local food pantries servicing the needy will be running on near bare shelves.

Seeing these unrelated but reoccurring trends time and again, more than a decade ago Middlesex County Food Outreach and Distribution Services, the County’s official food bank, partnered up with Plays-in-the-Park to drum-up donations from the production’s patrons.

“You see it every year,” said Jennifer Apostol, project manager for the Middlesex County Improvement Authority, the entity that oversees the MCFOODS operation. “The kids are out of school and unable to access their subsidized lunch plans. Meanwhile, people are vacationing, dealing with the added seasonal expenses and overall just donating less.”

Much to the relief of some of the County’s most disadvantaged individuals and families, the happy marriage between MCFOODS and Plays-in-the-Park has yielded several hundred tons of nonperishable food donations and other supplies.

That help couldn’t be more welcomed this year as MCFOODS reported a record high number of 49 agencies seeking its services in June. Representing, in some cases, hundreds of food recipients, each of those agencies recoups approximately 150 pounds of donations during MCFOODS’ weekly distributions in New Brunswick – approximately 50 pounds less than winter allotments due to the shortfall in supplies and uptick in need.

“We really need the public’s help on this one,” said MCIA liaison and Middlesex County Freeholder Carol Barrett Bellante. “Plays-in-the-Park brings in thousands of spectators each season. Now imagine if they all just brought one food item? We could make significant ground in eradicating the summertime hunger that continually plagues our County.”

Shows are scheduled to begin at 8:30 p.m. every night throughout the summer, excluding Sundays. This year’s remaining programs includes Monty Python’s Spamalot from July 17 through July 27 and Xanadu from Aug. 7 through Aug. 17.

Children ages 12-and-under are free, and ticket prices range from \$7 for adults to \$5 for seniors. Tickets can be purchased between 5:30 and 9 p.m. at the box office, located on Pine Drive on the Roosevelt Park Grounds.

Anyone interested in donating to MCFOODS but unable to attend Plays-in-the-Park can also find permanent drop-off boxes at libraries across the County, including those in East Brunswick, Edison, Metuchen, Milltown, Monroe, North Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Piscataway, Plainsboro, South Brunswick, Spotswood, South Amboy and Woodbridge.

Currently, MCFOODS is most in need of cereal, tuna, fish, rice, canned vegetables, stew, peanut butter, snacks and personal items like toothpaste, shampoo, diapers and wipes.

For more information on Plays-In-the Park, interested parties should log onto [www.playsinthepark.com](http://www.playsinthepark.com) or email [pipoffice@playsinthepark.com](mailto:pipoffice@playsinthepark.com).

Further details on MCFOODS programs, like instruction on starting a food drive, can be found at [www.mciauth.com](http://www.mciauth.com) or by contacting Apostol at 609-409-5033 or [ja@mciauth.com](mailto:ja@mciauth.com).

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